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## A Perspective for Aspiring Actors in Alberta

Alberta  
CULTURE

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## AUDITIONS

### A Perspective for Aspiring Actors in Alberta

Questions or Comments Regarding "Auditions"  
can be addressed to:

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PLEASE NOTE: The term "actor" is used in this booklet to denote male and female actors. To make reading easier the pronoun "He" and the possessive "His" are used to describe all actors, not to describe gender.



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## A. INTRODUCTION

"Auditioning is the hardest part of acting. It's harder than opening night or a flubbed line." - Actress Marlane O'Brien

The audition is an integral part of every actor's life. A successful audition can advance your career. A successful audition gives you a JOB! It also gives you the satisfaction of professionally pursuing your chosen career.

The audition is a brief moment for you to dazzle and to show your brilliance. Since the opportunity is short, your performance should be designed to impress quickly.

Despite its imperfections, the audition is still a commonly used system of hiring actors. Considering the importance of auditions, it is startling how many actors come to them under-prepared. This booklet is designed to give you, the aspiring professional actor, guidelines on how to approach auditions and what to expect. The booklet also highlights some important aspects of the business of acting. Research for this overview was concentrated on the theatre situation in Alberta.

The reality of acting is that many actors will audition for the same part; however, it is impossible for all of them to be successful. At the beginning of your career you may face many rejections, and you may take them far too personally. Learning some basics about auditioning can help you to get where you want to go and to weather the inevitable rejections.

Leslie Yeo, a long time actor and director, is well aware of the vagaries and pitfalls of an acting career:

"It's the most difficult profession to get into  
and the most difficult to leave once you're in it  
...because you like it so much."

The audition in theatre, film, television and radio is your chance to convince auditors that you have talent, that you have ability and that you have what they are looking for.

Auditions are not necessarily pleasant experiences but they are necessary experiences. They can be valuable in themselves even when you don't get a part. Jan Miller, an Edmonton actress and A.C.T.R.A. President 1983-84, suggests that you go to auditions whenever possible. "The more you are exposed to potential engagers the better it is. Even if you don't think you are right for a part, go to the audition if the Casting Director will let you. It's good experience and you may make a good contact for the future."

Many actors believe that the ability to perform well at auditions, to be natural and reasonably comfortable, comes with practice. If you subscribe to this belief, going to as many auditions as possible will naturally improve your chances of getting a part.

#### B. WHAT ARE THE AUDITORS LOOKING FOR ANYWAY!

The auditors are the people conducting the audition. This may include any or all of the following:

- Artistic Director (theatre)
- Director and/or Producer (in any medium)
- Playwright
- Casting Director
- Casting Agent and various assistants

It's difficult to say exactly what they look for as the comment from Nancy MacDonald, Administrative Director of Lunchbox Theatre in Calgary, indicates:

"You never know...and half the time they (the auditors) don't know what they are looking for until they see it."

Naturally, they look for good acting and that elusive quality called "talent", so difficult to define but readily recognizable. They look for brilliance. They look for stage presence, good vocal range, the ability to move well and a professional attitude. Quite often it comes down to the right look.

The more that you can bring to an audience the better your chances are at impressing your auditors. For example, the ability to sing can be a definite advantage. Dance training can make your stage movements flow more naturally.

The following comments from professionals attest to the wide variety of factors that influence casting decisions. We asked them: What do you look for from an actor in an audition?

"I look for effectiveness but effectiveness based on honesty to the writing as well as honesty in putting it across to the audience." (Jace Van der Veen, Artistic Director of Northern Light Theatre.)

"For a very subtle quality. I look for an actor who is natural; who can just be the person I'm looking for." (Anne Wheeler, Independent Film Director/Producer)



"People who are lively and talented, with a wide range of skills, emotions and experiences that they can convey. People who will also work well together in a company situation". (Gerry Potter, Artistic Director of Workshop West)

"Confidence. Sometimes people are very good but terribly shy and they almost talk themselves out of a job. They have to learn to have the confidence that they are talented." (Bob Baker, Artistic Director of Phoenix Theatre)

"For unique, distinctive voices and great (verbal) versatility." (Greg Rogers, Director of C.B.C. Radio Drama, Calgary)

"In an audition I want to hear if the actor can talk so I want to hear vocal stretches. I want to see if he can move like a human being really moves." (Michael Dobbin, Executive & Artistic Director of Alberta Theatre Projects)

"Actors who stand still. Fidgety people are suspect." (Leslie Yeo, Actor/Director)

One director suggested actors remember the business basics of a firm handshake and a look straight in the eyes. Edmonton Casting Agent Betty Chadwick makes the importance of a business-like attitude clear:

"Some people are very professional and a pleasure to deal with. Presentation is most important. A medium talent with an aggressive enough manner may present himself in a more dynamic way than a more talented type who is less organized; therefore, he may end up working more."

Toronto Producer Marlene Smith is often involved with musicals and generally auditions nationally for her cast. She recognizes the audition as a critical step in being cast.

"A professional attitude is a MUST. Be prepared. For a musical audition, that means bring your music and your dance clothes; do your warm-ups before you come in to the audition room...and don't chew gum!"

### C. WHAT THE AUDITORS LOOK FOR DEPENDS PARTLY ON THE MEDIUM YOU ARE AUDITIONING FOR (THEATRE, FILM, T.V., RADIO)

The type of medium affects the roles you can play and will therefore audition for. Film and television are such intimate media that eyes alone can tell a story. The ability to express rapid changes of emotion visually without appearing mannered or melodramatic is essential in film and T.V. One danger the theatrical actor faces in these media is that of overacting or artificial acting. The actor's talents need to be adjusted to an intimate level. Appearance is more critical because make-up cannot do the wonders in film and T.V. that it can on stage. The camera close-up lets the film audience get too close to the actors.

Film and television emphasize naturalness and they usually have little rehearsal time. It has been suggested that these two factors lead casting people to look for actors with personalities very similar to those of the parts being cast. Nevertheless, acting skills are vitally important. An actor can be very close to the scripted character but not have enough range to play the role.

### D. UNIVERSAL DESIRABLE ATTRIBUTES

Different auditors and media may look for different things but some basics are desirable in any actor.

"A number of things are critical, for example, imagination and energy. The real goal in an audition is to hold attention". (Ben Henderson, Artistic Director of Nexus Theatre)

"I want to see a vivacious, energetic, gutsy performance". (Bartley Bard, Artistic Director of Lunchbox Theatre)

"I'm looking for honesty, for people who are vulnerable, who open up; that is the essence of an actor. Reveal something of yourself in an audition. If a person is hiding behind a mask, I don't have time to rip it off and get in there". (Scott Swan, Director of C.B.C. Radio Drama and Theatre)

### E. DIFFERENT KINDS OF AUDITIONS

Auditions vary in nature and in location. There are five commonly used methods of auditioning in the theatre: cold readings, prepared performances, personal interviews and improvisation.



In any audition be prepared to take direction and don't be thrown off if the director/auditors don't want to see much of your prepared pieces. Try to overcome the inevitable nervousness by really listening to directions.

COLD READINGS: When you are asked to read a script that you haven't prepared and may never have seen before, you are being asked to do a "cold reading". You can ask for several minutes to look over the script before reading. Cold readings are often used in auditioning for commercials. The way to prepare for cold readings is to work on sight reading. You can improve by practicing sight reading on your own or in front of an audience. Some actors get together to practice in front of and to be critically assessed by their peers.

PREPARED PERFORMANCES: These are pieces that you have chosen and prepared for the audition. You will not always get the chance to perform them just as you have practised them. For example, you may be stopped at a certain point and asked to improvise or the auditors may simply cut the piece short and go on to try something else with you.

PREPARED READINGS: When you are asked to "read" for a specific part in a specific play you have time to look at the play carefully before your audition. Often you will know which section of the play you will be reading from. This type of audition is usually the last part of the casting process. You may be "called back" a number of times to read for the same play and to read with different actors. Here the director has a chance to hear you speaking the words of the play he will be directing. Often his casting decision will be made on the basis of this type of reading. When you have an opportunity to "read for the part", come prepared. Read the play and familiarize yourself with the sections you will most likely be reading from.

PERSONAL INTERVIEWS: Interviews are often used by the director to see if you will be compatible with cast or troupe and to get a general idea of what you are like. In film and T.V. the interview alone may be used in casting for small parts.

IMPROVISATIONS: Improvs are used to see how you respond to direction, how imaginative you are on the spot, how you move, etc.

Theatre and film auditions generally last about 20 minutes. The first audition in theatre is usually step one in the selection process. If you are being considered for the part you are called back to audition again. This may happen several times before a decision is made.



Some auditions will be more like interviews than like standard auditions. Georgina Kravitz of Studio North, for example, meets and talks with actors first. She may then ask them to prepare something relevant to the upcoming production. The nature of the audition reflects the nature of the company; in this case, a summertime theatre with one major original production a year and a special interest in students.

Preparing yourself for an audition of any kind takes hard work. "The important thing to remember is that you can never over-prepare in terms of what you have available at your fingers to impress your auditors. Sometimes there is no rhyme or reason as to what they want to see". (Marlane O'Brien, Actress)  
Remember that the preparation has a positive effect on your overall training. Remember, too, that:

"You don't get a job just because you're hard working. Some performers work really hard but don't get cast. They may just not fit in with a director's image."  
(Jan Miller, A.C.T.R.A., President, Edmonton)

"Jobs are limited and Artistic Directors usually have a good number of (candidates) to choose from. It's not easy to get that first meaty role. Often you just have to wait for the right role to come around". (Brian Paisley, Artistic Director of Chinook Theatre)

Rejections are something even the best actor has to face:

"To the strong they are discouraging, to the weak, disastrous". From Robert Cohen, Acting Professionally: Raw Facts about Career Acting. Barnes & Noble Books, 1977.

"If you didn't get the job you aren't necessarily bad...finally, casting is an individual set of choices on a director's part." (Martin Kinch, Artistic Director, Theatre Calgary.)

Learning to have confidence in yourself despite rejections and to wait "creatively" between parts is a way to keep your energy and enthusiasm high.

## **F. MUSICAL THEATRE**

When auditioning for a musical or for musical theatre, you generally prepare two pieces designed to show off your best vocal range. The situation itself will differ depending on the size and nature of the musical. For any show an actor must be able to sing within the range of the music. Sometimes this will merely require that the actor carry a tune. For a full musical, however, a very strong voice is usually needed.

Actress Marlane O'Brien, last seen in Edmonton as Duddy's girlfriend in the Citadel's musical production of "Duddy", has been in many musicals and to many auditions. She feels that "there are no parameters in choosing a song other than what you can do with your voice. If you have more than one area of vocal strength, prepare two pieces and show them off."

Marlene Smith of Marlene Smith and Company in Toronto; has produced a line of hit musicals including "Hair", "Godspell", "Ain't Misbehavin'" and most recently "Cats". She suggests that choosing a song for auditioning is quite simple "just pick something to suit your best range. Don't necessarily do a piece from the show being cast. In fact, it's a little presumptuous to do one of the hit songs." You may suffer in the inevitable comparison to the singer who made it a hit.

"Keep in mind the type of musical that you are auditioning for, and try to sing songs with a similar style and mood if you decide not to sing from the show". (Actress, Faye Cohen)

"Choose songs and pieces that are close to you, that you do well and that you enjoy doing. Choose songs that are in your range and that you're confident about. Don't stretch your voice by trying to impress me with something flashy". (Doug Riske, Freelance Director)

It is difficult for an actor to make a living working solely in musicals in Canada. Most musical actors perform in cabarets, dinner theatres and the like, in addition to the occasional full-blown musical that is produced in one of Canada's major cities. Many of them perform more often in 'musical theatre' than in musicals, the distinction being the former includes music while the latter focuses on music. Given that full musicals are so expensive to mount, and thus infrequently mounted, and then only in major cities, this is a survival tactic for the actor/singer. In Alberta in 1983 there were eleven musicals produced professionally. Of this number two had large casts and nine were of the small cast revue style. In 1984 there were 12 musicals produced and again only two had large casts.

Faye Cohen, has acted in numerous musicals across Canada. Following is her personal viewpoint on musicals and auditioning for them.

"Musical theatre is a joyous art form. It is a celebration of man and the world he lives in. A song occurs in a musical when an emotion becomes so great, that it exceeds the bounds of normal speech and must be sung. Yet, a song must be based strongly in reality or you are left with posturing and mannered acting. Musical theatre is a style, just as commedia or Brecht or Shakespeare are styles. As in any theatrical style, truth is what is being sought. Even with the added technical difficulties of dance and melody, it must come from the heart and the mind.

A musical theatre audition is not much different from an acting audition. One needs to prepare a song in the same manner that you would approach a monologue. First, look at the words - what am I saying? Why do I say it? How do I say it? All too frequently, actors put their emphasis upon melody and choreography as opposed to understanding what a song is about. Take the words out of the song and speak them. A good composer creates a melody which supports the lyrics - trust them.

Most actors and singers learn songs from musicals by listening to original cast recordings. Great, but be warned! Make the song your own. You are you, not Frank Sinatra.

In an audition, you have only one chance to impress. One often hears the argument of whether to sing a song from the show you are auditioning from, or to avoid that like the plague. The only rule to follow is to sing what you feel most comfortable with, and to be good! Auditioners are not always known to be creative, so go strongly after the role that you want to play. Certainly, a familiarity with the music of a show is advisable. If you make it to the call-backs, you are usually required to sing from the show. A knowledge of the music and the story is an advantage and a comfort during this tense experience.

Finally, make a song simple. Do not clutter it with extraneous movements. Your movements should be definite and in character. Anyone can sing. Whether you have trained extensively in opera, theatre, or tap; whether you merely speak your way through a song; whether you are in tune or not; or whether you read music or not, if you have done your homework, you can sell a song.

Musical theatre is an amazingly energetic and demanding theatrical form. Keep on taking classes: voice, movement, music. There is no substitute for technical proficiency. Often a role will boil down to whether you can execute a dance step or sing in the required range. Training is essential, not only for personal growth but also to ensure that you do not injure yourself - a common musical performer's plight. Even while you are in performance, take classes!

Musicals are expensive shows to mount. They tend to have large casts, and very expensive royalties. Musicians command large salaries, and the technical demands of most musicals require a large technical and running crew. Therefore, the larger and more established theatres tend to do the large cast musicals, which tend to be found in the larger cities. The costs of these large musicals are making the old-style Broadway musical obsolete.

New, smaller musical revues with small casts, few musicians, and minimal sets are therefore, very much in vogue. Versatility, technique, and acting are more crucial than ever." (Faye Cohen, Actress)



Auditions for full musicals can be fairly gruelling as the comments from one Albertan actress indicate. Susan Henley, a 1984 graduate of the University of Alberta Drama Department, now living in Toronto, was given a call-back to an audition for "CATS". Although she didn't get the part, her experience as one of nine women from across Canada called back to sing the part of "Grizabella" was an illuminating and valuable experience.

"You have to be patient and not let the competition get to you. At the first audition, I waited 7 hours with about 300 other people. They called Equity first and then non-Equity people, taking in groups of 20 at a time. They eliminate 16 right away on the basis of looks. Then they start to eliminate on the basis of range.

I brought my own music for two songs and sang both of them. Generally if they are not interested they stop you after 16 bars and dismiss you with a "thank you". After I finished singing, we had a small interview. I guess the audition lasted about 25 minutes in all.

At the first audition, I wasn't terribly dressed up. I just went in my dance clothes. But the choreographer took me aside and whispered that if I got a call-back I should really be a lot more dressed up. It's pretty unusual from what I hear to get that kind of helpful advice.

I was called back with 8 other women to try for the part of Grizabella who sings "Memory". For this audition I went really dressed up; a very nice dress, hair done up and lots of make-up because the part was for an older woman. We went in individually and sang a piece that we had been given several days before, by memory, in front of a panel of 10 to 12. What can I say... it was really nerve-wracking. Hopefully some of the panelists will be good contacts for the future". (Susan Henley, Actress)

Nerve wracking or not, it's a good idea to go to as many auditions as possible. As Marlane O'Brien pointed out - "go to auditions for everything - film, theatre, t.v., commercials. I went to 30 auditions last summer and got one job. You may only get one job out of it but something may click...and often does, down the line". William Fisher, Associate Artistic Director of the Citadel Theatre, noted that "It's a smart thing to go to auditions. It keeps your profile up, keeps you busy and keeps you in touch with what's going on in the business".

## G FILM AUDITIONS

Auditions for film are significantly different from auditions for theatre. For one thing, you don't audition with prepared pieces. Anne Wheeler, independent director/producer, suggests improv is closer than prepared pieces to what is done in a film audition. Film requires the actor to tone down, to be natural; instantly natural.

Film auditions may include an interview or as Ms. Wheeler commented, "a casual talk to get a sense of what the actor can bring to a part from his or her own personal history".

The film audition is coloured by the nature of the medium. The generally short rehearsal time means that rehearsal often takes place on shooting days, before the scene is shot. Usually less than one minute of a scene is shot at a time. Scenes are shot out of sequence, several times, along with close-ups and reaction shots. Film is constructed piece by piece and later cut into a continuous whole. The actor never acts continuously for long periods (e.g. 30 minutes) as he does in theatre.

In film work, a full script is usually sent to potential lead actors before the audition. Anne Wheeler likes to send potential actors the script so they can read it and have the character in mind when they come to the audition. In the audition, she has an actor read part of the scripted role and then asks them to improvise in character.

"It lets me know if a person understands character, if he can maintain character and if I like him in that scene".

Alternately actors in film and television may be given a short excerpt from the script when they arrive at the audition and given time to look it over.

Mike Douglas of Douglas Communications Ltd. in Edmonton likes to use a two-minute section written for the audition that is similar to the real script but is more intensely dramatic and designed to test the actors.

"I try to create a challenging and intense environment that is very much like the demands of a film set. I move very close to the actors in the background so they can feel me around them because people doing their thing (taking sound, moving lights) behind the actors is a very big part of the film process."

Jack Emack, Edmonton C.B.C. Television Drama Producer, says "people who want to get a look at the script in advance always impress him".

## H. WHAT AUDITION PIECES SHOULD I DO?

An important element in any audition is the vehicle through which you show your talents; the audition piece. Many theatres request you to perform two pieces of contrasting style: for example, classical and contemporary, or dramatic and comedy. The choice of audition pieces is often yours. But until you have developed a repertoire, choosing a piece can be difficult.

Directors are primarily interested in seeing how well you do a piece, not in the piece itself. However, a piece that shows you at your best is an obvious advantage. The following comments may serve as guidelines.

Choose pieces that emphasize your skill and versatility. If you can sing, dance and act, do all three.

"For me, an audition is a time for the actor to show everything he can do including movement and musical skills." (Brian Paisley, Artistic Director of Chinook Theatre)

Audiences of stage and screen have diverse palates. They want comedy, drama, musicals, serious fare and light, frothy entertainment. It isn't surprising then that the versatile actor is often in demand.

"Versatility is extremely valuable. It is imperative that actors continue to take classes in acting, singing and dancing so as not to limit themselves to one form." (Brian Paisley, Chinook Theatre)

"I think it is essential that an actor be as well rounded as possible. Not that every actor needs to have a tremendous singing voice, but they should continue to hone their singing and dancing skills." (Bob Baker, Phoenix Theatre)

Naturally your style of audition will depend to some degree on the type of theatre or role you are auditioning for. A cabaret style audition isn't appropriate if you are trying out for Lady Macbeth. However, the opposite may not be true. One director indicated that he likes to see auditions of Shakespeare pieces even when he is casting for musical comedy as the pieces illustrate many of the actor's skills.

"In general, know your theatre and know what you are auditioning for." (Stephen Heatley, Artistic Director of Theatre Network)



Catalyst Theatre, as an example, looks for some different qualities than traditional theatre may emphasize. They play to special audiences including prisons, hospitals and social service agencies. As a result they look for people with a certain kind of attitude, flexibility, skills and life experience. To find these qualities Catalyst uses improvisations in auditioning.

"Study the seasons you are auditioning for and pick audition pieces that will show off qualities relevant to roles you hope to be cast for" (Rick McNair, Free-Lance Director)

"Choose a piece that shows you off, your ability to develop character and to work with a role" (Ben Henderson, Artistic Director of Nexus Theatre)

Many directors suggest that when auditioning for a specific part, you don't choose a part from the play the theatre is actually casting for. Choose instead a part that is similar to it. But be familiar with the play in any case as you may be asked to do a cold reading.

When choosing an audition piece it's better to stay away from last year's top five theatre hits or the top ten from university drama courses. The same is true for songs you include. Many other actors will choose those pieces. Numerous directors expressed dismay at having to watch the same "famous" speeches being done by actor after actor. Rick McNair, for example, suggests that you don't do the Ring Speech from Twelfth Night; Mark Schoenberg suggests that you stay away from Emily's "Goodbye World" from Our Town and from the prologue to Henry V; an Equity spokesperson advises that you don't do anything from The Glass Menagerie or such standards as The Sound of Music.

Many professionals suggest that you don't venture too far afield into new or obscure works. Several Artistic Directors indicated that they usually appreciate being familiar with the piece an actor performs. Martin Kinch, Artistic Director of Theatre Calgary says he appreciates it when he sees "pieces [that] suggest the actor has some acquaintance with Canadian work."

There are many parts to choose from and you should always try to make the piece "your own". But be careful:

"I regard it as a pretension when people write their own pieces". (Mark Schoenberg, Free-Lance Director and Critic)

Directors suggest that you pick a piece within your possible age range. Although you may have done much older parts at school, it is unlikely you will be cast professionally in a part twenty years your senior.

At some point every actor has to be honestly self-critical and determine his image. Physical type, age and artistic range all form one's image. These factors can determine the medium you work in and can help you to develop a good idea of roles within your range, whatever the medium. But don't fall into the trap many directors fall into; that of typecasting...yourself. Stories abound of the exceptional case where an actor who didn't fit the director's image of a part had a special quality that got him the role.

Pick a piece that is within your range, that you feel comfortable with and that you know shows you off to advantage:

"An audition should be short and good and leave them wanting more". (Leslie Yeo, Actor/Director)

Two to three minutes per piece is a recommended length.

Martin Kinch says "I prefer the actual audition pieces to add up to five to seven minutes. Then I talk to the actor for fifteen minutes. Then I know whether I can work with him, I know how his mind works."

Dynamic pieces that illustrate various abilities are good ones to choose.

"Very serious, long pieces with little change can really put you off". (Bartley Bard, Artistic Director of Lunchbox Theatre)

Ultimately you use your own discretion in choosing your audition piece. If a piece is well known yet you feel comfortable with it and think it shows you off to advantage, use it. However, performing something fresh may be in your best interest. Think of the tired director who has just seen the sixth Juliet that day.

### I. GETTING TO KNOW YOU

Make yourself known. Send a short resume with your most important credits and a photo on it to: Artistic directors of theatres (see attached list of professional theatres in Alberta), casting agents, A.C.T.R.A. and Equity Reps., television stations, film companies and independent producers.

A resume without phone number and address usually winds up in the garbage. A photo without a name on it can get separated from the resume and become useless. See page                      for the ingredients and a sample layout of a good resume and how to take an effective photo.

Once you have sent out your resumes, call one to two weeks later for an appointment to see the individuals in person. Not all the contacts will be able to see you just then, but you will have made the important first step.

Keep in contact with these people to find out what's happening and to remind them that you're available. Keep a current address and telephone number on their files. Unless you have an agent whose number is on the resume, you can simply miss out on possible parts if people can't contact you.

"Talented actors may get less work than less talented actors if they lack perserverance or if they can't be found because, for example, their number is disconnected". (Margaret Mooney, Assistant to the Artistic Director, Citadel Theatre.)

Another example of the importance of contacting and keeping a current number on file with theatres is the case of the general audition. They are not always advertised extensively. You may hear about them by word of mouth or by checking with the theatre and Equity, but why take a chance? Contact them first.

The Citadel Theatre, for example, holds an annual open audition. If you are a new actor on the scene and they have your resume and photo in their files, they will contact you to come to the audition. Obviously step #1 in getting an audition is to send them your resume and photo.

Once you have made initial contact with theatre, film and T.V. companies, keep in contact for coming productions and specific auditions.

Contact the professional associations. This goes for theatre, film, television and radio. Roberta Mayer, N.F.B. Production Co-ordinator in Edmonton, suggests that the best way to find out about any of their auditions is to contact the professional organizations; in this case, A.C.T.R.A. and casting agents. Most production companies don't want to be deluged with ambitious actors. But the professional organizations exist, among other things, to inform you of what's happening.

The reality of the acting business is that it's just not enough to contact A.C.T.R.A. or even a casting agent. Some directors do not inform A.C.T.R.A. or Equity immediately of upcoming auditions. Not all producers or directors use a casting agent. It is very important to keep in touch with these people, but you may want to compliment this with your own calling around.



Invite people you contact to performances you are in. Tell them of T.V. shows or films you perform in that are being screened. Most directors prefer to see actors in better conditions than at an audition and appreciate being notified about your work. Many directors indicated that when they are about to cast a show, they will remember people whose work they have already seen.

Remember the alternatives to the traditional "audition", for example the Fringe Festival which takes place in Edmonton every summer. According to Brian Paisley, the Festival organizer, one impetus behind the festival was to create an opportunity for actors, directors, etc. to show their work and avoid auditioning.

"Auditions are such a limited time period to show your 'stuff' and are high pressure situations. This was one motivating factor behind the Fringe. It's almost a 9 day audition which lets actors, directors, playwrights and other theatre professionals show what they can do in plays and roles that they themselves choose". (Brian Paisley)

Go to general auditions. Most theatres have one or two general calls a year so the artistic director can have a brief view of the talent available for the season. These are important auditions for you to be at if directors don't yet know you and haven't seen any of your work. While general auditions cannot be counted on to get you a part, artistic directors indicate that they often ask actors seen for the first time in general audition to audition for specific parts.

If you are called back after a general call, WEAR THE SAME OUTFIT that you did at the first call. It helps the auditors remember who you are and what you did.

Some general calls are posted with Equity. Following this section is a list of professional theatres in Alberta and, where possible, their general calls.

The Artistic Director of Theatre Calgary, Martin Kinch explains that he doesn't have "a lot of faith in general auditions. [These are] usually done by a new director to a city or theatre."

William Fisher is an Associate Director of the Citadel Theatre and the Artistic Director of the Citadel on Wheels/Wings. He is wary of the general audition.

"They put a lot of pressure on the actor and on the director. The atmosphere is tough and they can even be a little negative." Instead he prefers to interview actors who call him (when he's not too busy). After the initial meeting, he may then call them to audition for specific roles. "Then the actors are usually more relaxed as they know me a little".

Nevertheless, general auditions are important opportunities for actors to meet with directors and they should be attended.

### J. WHAT ELSE SHOULD I REMEMBER

Get psyched up for an audition; there is only a short time to impress. Time is always short in theatre, film, television and radio, so be on time for interviews and auditions. In fact, be early so you feel prepared when it is your turn. Few auditions are longer than twenty minutes and if you are late, you will probably only get the remaining time. If you are unavoidably delayed, phone or briefly explain when you do arrive.

Warm up before the audition. It may be worth your while to telephone the theatre before your audition and ask if there is a room to warm up in.

Be prepared for your audition. Preparation will give you more confidence even if your auditors want to see mainly improvisations. If you've been sent a script, read it. If there is a script, but it wasn't sent to you, ask if you can look at it before the audition. Quite often difficult-to-get contemporary scripts are available at the:

Alberta Culture Library  
11th Floor, C.N. Tower  
10004 - 104 Avenue  
Edmonton, Alberta  
T5J 0K5  
(403) 427-2571  
Hours: 8:30 A.M. to 4:30 P.M.

If the script you want is not available yet, but it is an adaptation, try to get the original work. It will give you a general idea of plot and characters.

When auditors request you to perform two pieces of contrasting style, have them well prepared. Prepared pieces can have an advantage over scripted work - you get more rehearsal time. Practice in front of friends, other actors, anyone who will be an audience.

It's also advisable to practice the pieces in different locations so that the audition location itself doesn't throw you off.

Be prepared for anything and for any style of auditioning (see page 6).

"Be prepared. Never assume anything especially if the call is vague and uninformative. If you're auditioning for a musical, take your music and some dancing clothes. In the end you and you alone are responsible for not getting a job if you are unprepared". (Marlane O'Brien)

"I expect everyone who is trained properly to do a good audition piece." (Martin Kinch, Artistic Director of Theatre Calgary).

When auditioning for film or television be prepared to see a video camera and camera person in the audition. The auditors usually decide who will play a role after they have looked at the video recordings of the auditions.

If you are auditioning for a specific part, directors suggest that you wear something in character, within reason. However, full costume regalia is not recommended. If, for example, your idea of what is "in character" is very different from the director's idea, he may not be able to "see" you in the part he's casting for. And if you don't try to dress in character, but wear something so totally different from the part you're auditioning for, you can ruin your chance at being cast. Several directors mentioned that, in several instances, the outfit an actor wore may be the deciding factor in giving him the part.

"I was looking for a cowboy for this role and one actor came dressed as a cowboy. It was so easy to see him in the part. He got it". (Bartley Bard, Artistic Director of Lunchbox Theatre)

Once again, use your own judgement. You can dress more flamboyantly for some theatres than for others so do a little research and find out the kind of works they do and something about their approach to theatre. If in doubt, wear understated clothes. For example, slacks, a T-shirt and running shoes are appropriate for an audition as long as they are clean and neat!

Be professional in the audition. Don't forget your resume and a photo. Even if you haven't yet got your professional photos, take in a polaroid; anything so that they can remember your face.

Some nervousness at auditions is unavoidable and can be constructive. You have to learn to dissipate or harness the excess nervous energy. Do your warm up before the audition; or take a walk, do yoga, anything that usually relaxes you. This will also help you to move easily and naturally once on stage.

When you get into the audition, listen to anything the auditors say. Listening is a lot harder when you're nervous but it helps to focus your attention. Then concentrate on what you're doing, not who you are doing it for.



**K. HOW DO I TREAD THE LINE BETWEEN BEING PLEASANTLY AGGRESSIVE  
AND BEING A PERSISTENT PEST?**

Theatre

Every theatre we contacted in Alberta expressed interest in meeting new actors. Directors often cast actors whose work they know, but they like to see fresh faces and new talent. They are always interested in seeing you perform in other works, as mentioned earlier, so inform them of what you're in.

Theatres with regular seasons can be contacted regularly but not too often. Some directors suggest you call every two to three months. If you know a theatre's season and they are only using 2 female actors both in their 40s, and you aren't close, there's no point in phoning during the season. Wait until the end of the season when they are beginning to think about next season's productions.

Television

Sue Borland, a C.B.C. commercial producer, does all her own casting. She indicated that she is happy to hear from new people including people who are just starting into commercials. She, like many producers and directors, keeps her own resume and photo file and appreciates being contacted by actors.

Some producers will not call A.C.T.R.A., but they will call casting agents, so you should, too. The casting agent will notify A.C.T.R.A. so if you phone A.C.T.R.A. you'll be referred to the casting agent.

To be safe, contact A.C.T.R.A. as well as casting agents and the producers themselves; the latter at least to introduce yourself. By contacting local television stations, including network affiliates, you can find out who is in charge of commercial and dramatic production and establish contact with them.

Film

There were mixed reactions from film producers and directors on the subject of being contacted by actors. In general, most production companies don't mind having actors call them and send in resumes and photos. Independent companies don't always hire A.C.T.R.A. people so if you are non-A.C.T.R.A. you may be doing yourself a favour if they have your photo on file.

Arvi Liimatainen is a film director at Kicking Horse Productions in Edmonton. He doesn't recommend that actors just drop by the production house as Kicking Horse hires through a casting agent. He feels actors are wasting their time, and often his, if they just drop by when no production is underway. He does, however, like to know what actors can do and appreciates receiving a note saying basically : "Hi. I'm performing at this theatre or on this channel or in this film at \_\_\_\_\_. Watch me!"

The National Film Board North West Production Office in Edmonton likes to receive resumes and photos. In general, The National Film Board directors do their own casting. Many directors will do partial casting and have a casting agent do the rest.

Most companies do go through a casting agent so that's the person to contact. Keep in contact with A.C.T.R.A., too. Since using a casting agent is variable, a reasonable approach is to call companies you are interested in and ask how they do their casting. Send them a resume if they ask for one and try to arrange to meet them.

#### L. THE PROFESSIONAL RESUME

A resume is a very important item when it comes to getting an audition and eventually a job. For one thing, it tells the director where and how to get in touch with you. Your resume should always have:

- Your name in BOLD PRINT at the top
- A current address and telephone number
- A permanent address. If this isn't appropriate it may be wise to give an alternate address (e.g. that of reliable friend) in case you're away and it is urgent to contact you.
- Your vital statistics: height, weight, hair and eye colour, union affiliations. There is controversy over whether or not to include your age. Some actors feel it will prejudice whoever is casting. Use your own discretion. Presumably your photo will speak for itself. One solution is to put in your age and the age range you play.
- Education: University, college, professional classes and workshops. Include educational background even if it is not directly related to drama.

Keep your resume short. A one page resume is recommended. In fact, a one-sided, one page resume can be stapled on the reverse of your resume photo. Make sure your name and a contact number are on the photo as the two sheets may get separated.

Organize your resume logically with your most impressive credits first. List your role, the play, when and where it was performed and who directed it.

Type your resume neatly without typos or misspelled words in it. Your resume sometimes speaks for you, so make sure it will impress its readers.

It is not advisable to get a resume typeset as, ideally you will be adding your most recent jobs to it regularly.

The following resume is an example of a good arrangement for all the salient details of a professional resume. It is a sample only. Its contents have been "made-up" and are not a comment on any organization or individual.



R E S U M E

J A N E T     Z I G N O D

Actress

Current Address:

Janet Zignod  
10004 - 104 Street  
Edmonton, Alberta  
T5M 1X6  
(403) 846-6666

Permanent Address (Parents):

11115 Riverview Way  
Edmonton, Alberta  
(403)654-3210

Union Affiliations:    Equity, A.C.T.R.A.

Height: 5'6"

Hair: Light Brown

Weight: 120 lbs.

Eyes: Blue

Skills: Dance, waterski, drive (class "2" license), swim

EXPERIENCE

LIVE THEATRE

Viola (principal)	Twelfth Night	Citadel; 1985	Director's name
Susan (principal)	Plenty	Alberta Theatre Projects; 1984	"
Babe (principal)	Crimes of the Heart	Alberta Theatre Projects; 1984	"
Sherry (principal)	Morality	Globe Theatre; 1983	"

FILM, T.V.

Actor	T.V. Commercial Ford	CFRN	Regional
Extra	Draw Feature Film	Holster Prod.	Director's name

RADIO

Leah (principal)	Whiskey Six	Stereo Theatre National	A.C.T.R.A. Award nomination
Janie, Flo, (Mandy)	Long Lance	C.B.C. Morningside	(4 out of a 10 episode series; 3 different characters 18-40 years).

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

University of Alberta Drama Department (B.F.A.); Ballet R.A.D.  
Pre-elementary.

OTHER SKILLS

Experience in video and film shooting. Play piano and guitar.

REFERENCES AND DEMO REEL AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

## M. PHOTOS

A resume photo is important. Directors use it to remember faces and names when they're casting. The photo is also used as an introduction. You send it to distant, unknown professionals or put it in "Face to Face"\* and it's you, as far as casting people are concerned. There really are people across Canada, sitting in rooms, poring over photos, trying to find faces for parts. Better make yours look good!

Choosing a photo involves choosing an image. You are trying to sell yourself so pick an image that shows off your best qualities. It's best to have some advice from friends, an agent, or theatre professionals on your final choice.

You may want different photos for different media. Smiles and teeth for television and commercials; a little more serious for film and theatre. However, most actors use a single photo for all their work.

Most resumes are head and shoulder shots. You can get composite photos with several angle shots and a full-length view. These are most effectively used by models.

Try something different and attention-getting at your own risk. Casting people go through files and files of photos. They tend to find photos that are really different and don't show a clean, clear image quite irritating.

There are a few shoulds for any photo you choose. It should be:

- 8" X 10", usually black and white (this is a financial concern) with your name and number on it
- current
- really look like you. No touch ups. You may like a touched up or younger photo of yourself but it doesn't serve the purpose it's designed for. Get a new photo if you change your hair or some other feature significantly.
- clean and simple. Avoid hats or distracting, unnecessary accessories.
- don't have a busy background; this includes avoiding plants that appear to grow out of your head.
- choose between studio and a more casual look keeping in mind the image you are selling. Casting agents suggest natural lighting and nothing too artsy, such as heavily accented backlighting.

Once you have chosen your photo, get it mass-produced by a reputable reproduction lab. If you are at the University of Alberta, check with the campus Photo Services, 432-4186. Galbraith Reproductions Limited in Toronto is a reliable lab; 420 Bathurst Street, Toronto, Ontario, M5T 2S6 (416) 923-1106)

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\* See the A.C.T.R.A. Section.

You will need a good supply of these photos and with such labs the price per photo decreases with the number of prints ordered.

The following are 1985 costs at Galbraith Reproductions:

	Price Per Print
5 prints	\$2.50
25 prints	\$1.35
100 prints	\$0.80
250 prints	\$0.78
500 prints	\$0.77

There is an additional cost for the original negative if you send them an 8" X 10" photo or for enlargement if the negative is smaller than the size used for reproduction.

#### N. DEMO REELS AND VIDEOTAPES

A recording of one's voice, narrating, singing or whatever is appropriate, is one of an actor's professional tools. The recording, called a demo reel, can be sent to film, television and theatre companies to introduce or remind directors of your vocal range. If you do have a demo reel tell people it's available. (e.g. see the following sample resume)

A videotape of your work can be an effective marketing tool. Unfortunately it can work against you if it isn't a good quality production. Auditors may mistake poor production values for poor performance values. A well conceived and produced videotape can enhance the energy and vitality of a live performance.

The cost of a video demo reel can vary greatly. If you have performed on film or tape already, your demo tape can use cuts from these performances. Get a realistic projected cost before you go ahead with any idea.

#### O. THEATRE ADDRESSES

Directories of theatres listing addresses and sometimes information about them are available in libraries including the Alberta Culture Library. The Canadian Theatre Checklist, for example, is published annually by Canadian Theatre Review Publications, York University, Toronto. Even if you are unfamiliar with many of the theatres, the book will give you addresses to contact to find out more about them. American Directories such as Theatre Profiles are also available.



Alberta Professional Theatres  
(Not including totally commercial theatres)

Alberta Theatre Projects                      Auditions generally held in late  
220 - 9th Avenue, S.E.                      spring; call early to confirm.

Calgary, Alberta  
T2G 5C4

Michael Dobbin, Executive Producer, 294-7475

Any Space Theatre                      No regular audition times; no  
Box 632                      general auditions. Good time  
Banff, Alberta                      to contact them is mid-to late  
T0L 0C0                      summer.

Robert Kinzie, Administrative Director, 678-5827.

Boite A Popicos  
8526 - 91 Avenue  
Edmonton, Alberta  
T6C 3M9

Monica Kreiner, Administrator, 469-7193

Catalyst Theatre Society                      No regular audition times; no  
#601, 10136 - 100 Street                      general auditions. Good time  
Edmonton, Alberta                      to contact them is mid-to late  
T5J 0P1                      summer.

Ruth Smillie, Artistic Director, 426-5840

Chinook Touring Theatre  
10329 - 83 Avenue  
Edmonton, Alberta  
T6E 2C6

Brian Paisley, Artistic Director, 432-1553

Citadel Theatre  
& Citadel On Wheels/Wings (Touring Children's Theatre)  
9828 - 101 A Avenue  
Edmonton, Alberta  
T5J 3C6  
426-4811

Margaret Mooney, Assistant to the Artistic Director,  
Gordon McDougall, Artistic Director; William Fischer, Associate  
Artistic Director, Director Citadel Youth Theatre.

Loose Moose Theatre                      Each individual director  
2003 - McKnight Blvd. N.E.                      auditions on per production basis  
Calgary, Alberta                      generally 6-8 weeks prior to  
T2E 6L2                      opening. Announce auditions in  
Dennis Cahill, Associate Director, 250-1414                      Calgary media.

Lunchbox Theatre  
Box 9027, Bow Valley Square  
205 - 5 Avenue S.W.  
Calgary, Alberta  
T2P 2W4  
Usually auditions in spring and again in the late summer or early fall.  
Bartley Bard, Artistic Director, 265-4292

Nexus Theatre  
68 McCauley Plaza  
10025 Jasper Avenue  
Edmonton, Alberta  
T5J 2B8  
General auditions in the fall.  
Ben Henderson, Artistic Director, 429-3625

Northern Light Theatre  
11516 - 103 Street  
Edmonton, Alberta  
T5G 2H9  
Auditions usually held in June or August; phone around May.  
Jace Van der Veen, Artistic Director, 471-1586

One Yellow Rabbit  
3rd Floor, 637 - 11th Avenue, S.W.  
Calgary, Alberta  
T2R 0E1  
Announce auditions when required.  
Michael Stirling Green, Artistic Director, 264-8131  
Gyl Raby, Artistic Director

Phoenix Theatre  
10170 - 100 A Street  
Edmonton, Alberta  
T5J 0R6  
General audition held in summer, probably July and again in September.  
Bob Baker, Artistic Director, 429-4058

Small Change Theatre  
10022 - 103 Street  
Edmonton, Alberta  
T5J 0X2  
Don't hold auditions. Select actors for individual productions based on seeing an actors previous work.  
Brian Paisley, Artistic Director, 421-8879

Stage West Theatre Restaurant  
16615 - 109 Avenue  
Edmonton, Alberta  
T5P 1C2  
Artistic Director, 483-4051.

Studio North Theatre Association  
14741 - 47 Avenue  
Edmonton, Alberta  
T6H 5L3  
Summertime theatre; no regular auditions; call anytime to meet Artistic Director.  
Myra Anne Willis, General Manager, 439-6178.

Theatre Calgary & General auditions usually in May.  
Stagecoach Players Theatre (Touring)  
221 - 10 Avenue S.W.  
Calgary, Alberta  
T2R 0A4  
Martin Kinch, Artistic Director, 262-2146

Theatre Network General audition in early June.  
11845 - 77 Street  
Edmonton, Alberta  
T5B 2G3  
Stephen Heatley, Artistic Director, 474-6111

Workshop West Playwrights' Theatre  
#602, 10136 - 100 Street General auditions in late  
Edmonton, Alberta April; all Canadian theatre.  
T5J 0P1  
Gerry Potter, Artistic Director, 429-4251

PLEASE NOTE: All these theatres hold auditions for specific roles throughout their seasons. It is advisable to contact them during their season to ask whether they are hiring non-Equity actors for any of the parts. If you are Equity you are more likely to get an interview with the Artistic Director during the theatre's season than if you are non-Equity.

### P. PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

A.C.T.R.A., Canadian Actors' Equity Association (Equity) and the Union des Artistes (U.D.A.) are the prime professional associations an actor can join. Other professionals may join the organizations as well. Briefly, A.C.T.R.A. covers actors in film, T.V. and radio, while Equity is an association dealing with stage actors. The Union des Artistes is for francophone professional performing artists.

A.C.T.R.A. and/or Equity status is always a consideration to theatre and media companies. At some point in your career, it will become necessary to join one of these organizations. It is important therefore that you know the organizations exist, what they do for you and how and when to join them.

#### (i) A.C.T.R.A.

##### What Is It and Who Is It For?

A.C.T.R.A., formerly the Association of Canadian Television and Radio Artists (pre-84), currently stands for the "Alliance of Canadian Cinema, Television and Radio Artists". It represents professional actors, writers, broadcast journalists and researchers in film, television and radio. There is an internal division between actors and the other professional members.



A.C.T.R.A. negotiates minimum wage agreements with the media on behalf of its membership. Currently there are eleven agreements affecting performers between A.C.T.R.A. and Producers. When a production covered by one of these agreements gets underway (an A.C.T.R.A. production), the producer is obliged to hire A.C.T.R.A. people, to pay minimum rates stipulated by the agreement and to follow certain working day rules therein contained. Naturally an actor or an agent can negotiate for higher fees. However, this is usually reserved for actors who have begun to make a name for themselves.

A.C.T.R.A. members receive the minimum rate established for the category of role they are playing. The category (e.g. principal, actor, extra) is determined by the number of speaking lines you have. The number of lines varies with the agreement although an "extra" never has lines and cannot receive direction from the director.

#### Permits

When a production officially uses any A.C.T.R.A. members, it is an A.C.T.R.A. production. Non-A.C.T.R.A. performers may work on an A.C.T.R.A. production in certain circumstances, for example, when no available A.C.T.R.A. member can play the part. These performers need to get A.C.T.R.A. working permits for the duration of their participation, the cost of which depends on the category they are in. The permit cost can also depend on the production's regional or national status, residuals and buy-out clauses.

The permit system allows you, the aspiring professional, to get good experience working with more experienced actors. It is also a limiting system. This permit is easily obtainable once you have been offered an A.C.T.R.A. job. It may or may not be paid for by the producer. You can join A.C.T.R.A. when you have worked on six A.C.T.R.A. contracts with speaking lines (i.e. as an "actor" or a "principal"; extra contracts don't count toward the requisite six contracts). Under some agreements (e.g. the Independent Producers Agreement under which most films are made), permits are given on a weekly basis so it is possible to accumulate several permits while performing in one production.

A production may use all non-A.C.T.R.A. people, usually for financial reasons. No A.C.T.R.A. member may work on such a non-A.C.T.R.A. production unless there are extenuating circumstances.

In sum, a non-A.C.T.R.A. member can work on an A.C.T.R.A. production by getting a work permit but an A.C.T.R.A. member can not work on a non-A.C.T.R.A. production.

Edmonton A.C.T.R.A. Office:  
Sharon Killy  
#202, 10018 - 105 Street  
Edmonton, Alberta  
T5J 1C6  
(403) 423-0669; 423-1460

Calgary A.C.T.R.A. Office:  
Peggy Goth  
Suite 407, 815 - 1 Street S.W.  
Calgary, Alberta  
T2P 7N2  
(403) 262-4425

#### Membership cost (as of January/84)

Once you have 6 A.C.T.R.A. contracts you can join A.C.T.R.A. for \$220.00 membership fee. Equity members can join at 50 percent reduction.

Annual dues: Minimum of \$75.00 for the first year.  
For the ensuing years: Minimum of \$75.00 plus 1.5 percent of assessed yearly earnings for the previous year.

#### What Does A.C.T.R.A. Offer You?

A.C.T.R.A. negotiates minimum wage agreements with producers. There are separate agreements between A.C.T.R.A. (performers) and the following:

C.B.C. Television  
C.T.V. Television  
ACCESS Radio

Global T.V. (Ontario)  
Independent Producers

C.B.C. Radio  
ACCESS Alberta (Alberta)  
OECA (Ontario Educational  
Communication Authority)  
Commercials  
Audio Code

In addition to wage minimums , A.C.T.R.A. agreements stipulate daily working conditions.

#### A.C.T.R.A.:

- will provide you with legal "clout" in some dealings
- offers health insurance, optional extended health care to family and a R.R.S. plan
- sends its membership the national newsletter ACTRA Scope, published quarterly
- sends out regional newsletters (in Alberta sent every 2-3 months)
- has a notice board at its offices in Edmonton and Calgary as well as an Equity board. These boards will tell you any available information about upcoming productions and workshops

- publishes a catalogue of performers, "Face to Face", which is used by directors, producers and casting agents across Canada and the U.S. For a \$40.00 fee "Face to Face" prints your photo, a brief description of you and your work and where to contact you

Regional A.C.T.R.A. offices also publish local talent catalogues. The Edmonton version is "Faces in Focus" and the cost of inclusion is variable. The Calgary version is ACTRAlog, a binder book. Pictures can be changed as your image and appearance change. \$15.00 for inclusion.

#### Who's In A.C.T.R.A.?

Take a look at "Face to Face" to see some A.C.T.R.A. members.

National Membership:	7,000 - 8,000
Regional Membership Southern Alberta:	Approx. 100 actors
Northern Alberta:	Approx. 225 actors.

#### A.C.T.R.A. Income Statistics

Study by A.C.T.R.A. National Executive Director, Administration of A.C.T.R.A. members.

1982 Total A.C.T.R.A. earnings: \$55,008,088.00

- 66 percent comes from performers
- 15.7 percent comes from writers
- the balance is from writer and performer non-members

The national average income for actors in Canada is \$3,500.00. Performers principle sources of income in order of financial importance are:

1. C.B.C.;
2. Commercials;
3. Independent producers, CTV and Educational T.V.

The majority of all writers and performers are in the \$0 to \$5000 income bracket. Toronto has the largest number of members in the \$35,000 plus income bracket. (129 out of the performers guild) Of all A.C.T.R.A. writers and performers, 258 earn more than \$35,000 a year.



**(ii) CANADIAN ACTORS' EQUITY ASSOCIATION**

Equity includes actors, directors, choreographers, ballet dancers and opera singers. Canadian membership is approximately 3,000. The average Equity member's salary in 1982 was approximately \$5,500. The Equity Agreement is in force with all members of PACT (Professional Association of Canadian Theatres). Under the agreement, theatres are categorized according to potential box office gross. Depending on the theatre category (A to G with A being the largest), a certain percentage of the cast can be non-Equity. The category also affects salaries being paid to Equity actors.

A theatre may hire non-Equity people as apprentices or as "certified student" actors. An "apprentice actor" is an aspiring professional actor who is not yet a member of any professional performing arts association and is not a full-time student.

To qualify for Equity membership, an apprentice has to complete at least three productions for at least two different theatres within two years from the apprentice's first engagement. He can choose to work the full two years as an apprentice and then join Equity as long as he has participated in at least three productions. There is a registration fee of \$100.00 for each production and at the end of the two year period the apprentice pays the remaining \$100.00.

A "certified student" is anyone registered in a university, college or conservatory theatre program who is not a member of a professional performing arts association. He may be hired as a "non-professional" by an Equity house.

Equity members may not work on a production where they won't be paid Equity wages. They may work for non-Equity houses on a guest artist contract, which the theatre secures, as long as they are paid at least Equity wages. Equity members may work for amateur companies for a minimum fee of \$25.00 per performance with no fee for rehearsal time. Wage requirements are more stringent with semi-professional companies and should be checked with Equity. Any extenuating circumstances should be described and addressed to the Western Canada Representative, Alison Currie in Vancouver, who will in turn vote with local Equity representatives regarding the matter.

You may join Equity when you are offered a full Equity contract. However, it is not always as easy as it sounds. For example, you will not be hired if a present Equity member can fill the role. It may be more difficult to get in to audition for Equity theatres when you are non-Equity. There is no easy solution except to keep trying. On the other hand, you may not want to join Equity immediately because you can often get good experience in non-Equity parts. If you are Equity you can't play a role for less than Equity wages; as a result you may not be cast in those roles because of your Equity status.

Alison Currie, the Equity Business Representative in Vancouver, suggests you may have a better chance of getting valuable work as an unknown if you are non-Equity. You will undoubtedly want to join Equity at some point in your career if you want to do live theatre, but don't join immediately if you think the timing isn't right.

Equity offers its members many of the benefits that A.C.T.R.A. offers. Equity sets minimum acceptable rates above which you are free to negotiate with your engager. If necessary, Equity will go to arbitration on a performer's behalf. Equity also offers a pension plan and health insurance.

Auditions, meetings and workshops are publicized in the national Equity monthly newsletter. To be sure of finding out in time you should still contact the theatres. Equity theatres have call boards posting Equity newsletters and announcements and the A.C.T.R.A. regional offices have Equity Boards as well. These boards are not used as often as they could be by members and are therefore not always effective communicators. With some real interest, these boards could be more useful to actors.

Current initiation fee into Equity is \$400.00. Dues are 2 percent of annual income from Equity contracts with a minimum \$65.00 A.C.T.R.A. members may join at a discount up to \$200.00.

Business Representative for Western Canada:

Alison Currie  
456 West Broadway, Suite 206  
Vancouver, British Columbia  
V5Y 1K3 (604) 872-5441

Edmonton Representative: Darlene Bradley - 431-1350.

Calgary Representative: Brian Gromoff - 282-7501.

**(iii) UNION DES ARTISTES**

The Union des Artistes is the Canadian union of French-speaking professional performing artists with approximately 2500 members. Since most of its members live in central Canada, it is discussed only briefly.

Montreal Regional Contact: (514) 288-6682  
1290 Rue St. Denis  
Montreal, P.Q.

Toronto Regional Contact: (416) 967-4408  
2 College Street  
Toronto, Ontario

#### (iv) AGENCIES

There are several casting agents but few "talent agents" in Alberta at this time. Well known actors will often have personal managers as agents. When you are first starting your career, you will not be in a position to have such an agent. Talent agencies, however, do some of the things a personal agent would do.

Some Alberta-based actors have agents elsewhere (e.g. Toronto), who negotiate national and international contracts for them. The performers themselves usually handle the regional contracts. The agent may find them work and will handle bookings for shows and auditions that the performer might otherwise not be in a position to hear about.

The essential differences between a casting agent and a talent agent are:

- a) A talent agent works on your behalf; he may find you work, but you cannot rely on him to do so. He will negotiate on your behalf on any or all contracts and make your bookings. You then pay the agent a percentage of the contract fee. At an early stage in your career it is unlikely that you or your agent will be able to negotiate for fees higher than established A.C.T.R.A. or Equity fees. Even with an agent, a performer still has to hustle up his own work.
- b) The casting agent works for the producer. He locates talent for auditions. The actor is not charged a fee; the Producer pays the agent a set fee.

Casting Agents: Betty Chadwick - The Other Agency Casting Ltd.  
210, 10534 - 109 Street, Edmonton, Alberta  
(403) 428-8515

Diane Rogers - The Other Agency South  
2003 - 18th Avenue N.W., Calgary, Alberta  
T2M 1M9 (403) 282-4214

You should be listed with a casting agent as that may be the only way to find out about a production and auditions. Furthermore, if your face is familiar to the agent he will be more likely to think of you when a request is made.



You may wish to contact some of the following agencies for modelling or to check out other types of jobs that occasionally come to their attention.

John Casablanca's - (403) 429-1492  
Suite 220, 10132 - 105 Street  
Edmonton, Alberta

Vogue Models - (403) 488-8105  
10129 - 124 Street  
Edmonton, Alberta

Cover Girl Agency - (403) 482-5512  
102, 10633 - 124 Street  
Edmonton, Alberta

New Dawn Modelling and Talent Agency - (403) 244-3370  
301 - 8th Street S.W.  
Calgary, Alberta  
(New Dawn is a talent agency as well as a modelling  
and actor's casting agency)

#### **(v) FESTIVALS**

The Banff Centre hosts an annual week-long International Television Festival, this year happening in May. It caters to producers, directors and other production people. There are, however, seminars and screenings of interest to anyone associated with television and many interesting people in the business to talk to. The cost to attend as a member is quite high. You can attend the public screenings for free or volunteer to work for admission.

Other film and television festivals of general interest are held around the province e.g. an avant-garde film festival held in 1983 in Edmonton. All of these festivals are places to find out what is happening in the media and to meet people who work in it.

You can hear about these festivals as well as workshops from A.M.P.I.A. or from local film-makers co-operatives.

#### **(vi) FILM CONTACTS AND INFORMATION SOURCES**

A.M.P.I.A.  
Alberta Motion Picture Industries Association  
Suite 345, 10113 - 104 Street  
Edmonton, Alberta  
(403) 423-0709

Alberta Culture  
Film and Literary Arts  
12th Floor, C.N. Tower  
10004 - 104 Avenue  
Edmonton, Alberta  
T5J 0K5 (403) 427-2554

A.M.P.I.A. knows of most productions in town or coming to town and is a good source of information. It has a permanent office and a friendly office manager. It is worth a visit when you are becoming familiar with the film business.

Edmonton: F.A.V.A. The Society for Film and Video Artists (formerly Dramalab). F.A.V.A. meets regularly at the National Film Board Production Office.

Calgary: Calgary Society of Independent Filmmakers (423-4692)

#### **(vii) THE A.M.P.I.A. AWARDS**

A.M.P.I.A. gives annual awards to exceptional film-makers, performers, directors and other production people. Best Alberta actor and actress in an Alberta-made film receive awards. To be eligible, your film must be submitted for consideration. The tenth annual awards night held in February, 1984 was broadcast live on C.B.C. Television Alberta.

A.M.P.I.A. meetings are a potential contact place. A.M.P.I.A. caters primarily to producers, directors, etc. so few performers are members. However, you can attend meetings without being a member to see what they have to offer.

#### **(viii) DIRECTORY**

The "Reel West Film and Video Digest" is a directory for film, video and A.V. production in western Canada. Published yearly, it is a useful guide for contacts to find out what's happening in film and video. It lists associations, production personnel and companies, etc. It also has a short section on performers (including stunt people) and related services. You can have your name, address and a 12 word description listed in the guide for \$45.00

#### **Q. AN OVERVIEW OF THE ALBERTA ACTORS' EMPLOYMENT SITUATION** **1982-1984**

This booklet was conceived as a guide to assist aspiring actors in Alberta in becoming more informed about the business of acting, as well as a guide to effectively dealing with auditions. The mainstream publications which deal with this subject matter are generally geared towards the New York and Los Angeles scene, which is of course quite different.

When first starting out, an aspiring actor has many preconceptions as to the nature of the business.

A recent survey of professional Alberta actors at the top-end of both the income scale and the number of engagements scale revealed that:

- Alberta actors are hopeful about the prospects of acting work in Alberta, and they are positive about the quality of theatre here compared to that of other centres.
- The average theatre income, for actors at the top-end of the actor income scale in Alberta was \$8,818, in 1982, \$8,664 in 1983, and \$9,430 in 1984.
- Alberta actors supplement their income by teaching, doing media work, and whatever odd job they can get. Actors taking extra work as a cab-driver or a waiter is no myth.
- A standard theatre season is approximately 8 - 9 months in duration.
- Less than 50% of Alberta actors worked between 6 - 9 months in theatre in 1982, and the percentage has been declining steadily (As has been mentioned previously in this booklet, acting is a highly competitive business. There are more actors than there are jobs to be filled).
- Generally speaking, Alberta actors feel they are as well trained as any actor in Canada. The majority of the working actors surveyed were either trained at the U of A or a professional theatre school.
- One might be convinced that there is a great deal of money to be made in media. In fact the average annual media income over the past three years has been approximately \$3,500.
- 80% of Alberta actors surveyed worked one month or less in media in 1982, 1983, and 1984.
- Many aspiring actors may envisage making their mark in film and T.V. In actuality, Alberta actors found more work in radio than any other media.
- The majority of Alberta actors feel that media possibilities in Alberta are less than satisfactory for a meaningful segment of a yearly income.
- Media work makes up 15 - 20% of Alberta actors total income, while taking up less than 10% of their time.



- The "media carrot" proffered by Toronto, Vancouver, New York, and L.A. is still tempting to Alberta actors who wish to further develop their careers.
- The majority of Alberta actors surveyed feel that the major obstacle to maintaining and developing a career is being considered "local".
- Alberta actors similar to their national counterparts are generally dissatisfied with the remuneration for actors compared to other income groups with similar levels of skill and education.
- Even with combined supplementary incomes, Alberta actors still make less than the average Albertan.
- Alberta actors are not prepared to up-root themselves to chase rainbows. If they were given a positive offer of acting work, they would move to the "big four" media centres.
- Unless one has been trained as a teacher, or has a Masters Degree, teaching as a means of supplementing acting income isn't a good prospect.
- It isn't necessarily true that the best actors work the most. Lack of perseverance has been the downfall of many a good actor.

#### R. SO YOU WANT TO TRY YOUR CHANCES SOMEWHERE ELSE

At some point in your career you may decide that the opportunities and type of work that you are looking for can't be found in Alberta. Many beginning actors find it necessary to work outside of Alberta because those important first roles aren't all to be found here. They base themselves in the West (say Edmonton or Calgary) and then audition in the major western cities. Gerry Potter, Artistic Director of Workshop West, indicated that there is probably not enough work to keep a beginning actor working in one city unless he is exceptional. He stressed importance of young actors going to major centres to audition.

Travel is an important consideration even to the more established actor. Some actors choose to keep a residence in one place although they work across the country. Others decide to move to where they can find the greatest number of possibilities.

Heather MacCallum has lived in the west for over 13 years. She has been pursuing her acting career in Calgary and is about to move to Toronto to further her career.

We asked her why? "I've got to the point where I have to go to a place where I'll get more exposure. Film and television work can give you excellent exposure. The type of work I am looking for in either medium is more available in Toronto. The quality of work is just as good here (Alberta) as it is in Toronto, but it is mostly in theatre. There just isn't the film and T.V. work available here. Most potential engagers from the East don't get a chance to see your work out here if you work in theatre so it is pretty hard for them to see you under good conditions. I hope to work in film more and become more of a national name; something all actors strive for even if they don't talk about it. I would like to be known across the country and that is one of the reasons that I am going to Toronto."

Does the competition faze her? "The greater competition in a place like Toronto is depressing. But it is also exciting. For example, I went into an audition for an industrial film in Toronto. Some of the actresses there to audition are really well known. At first I felt unhappy about it, but then I started to feel good about competing with women of that calibre. It really gave me a push. So the competition is double-edged."

What about agents? "In Toronto I think you really need an agent. I arranged for an agent six months before moving there. It is kind of hard to do at first, because I have always done my own negotiating. But in Toronto you need an agent just to get into the commercial auditions. I actually called up an agent who told me four years ago that if I ever came to Toronto, he would like to represent me...and he is going to!"

A few comments on commercials: "Residuals from commercials are what keep many people going in Toronto when they aren't working. When you audition for a commercial you have to take the attitude that this is the most wonderful product even if you don't like it. You have to use your imagination sometimes, be creative. Make the best of it and really believe in it if you want to sell yourself to the producers."

Any plans upon arrival? "Well, first of all, find an apartment! Then I will call on my own contacts; people or theatres that I know well myself. My agent will be making contacts for me, but I'll also be sending out letters to directors and trying to get auditions."

John Hamelin was a well-established stage actor in Calgary. He decided to move and pursue a film and television career in Los Angeles. He wrote to us from his home in north Hollywood to say a few things about what life is really like for an actor in Los Angeles.

"When I left Canada, my attitude towards my career was I would rather have kept working a while longer and banked on the possibility of finally being seen or having a reputation spread and so having a casting person or producer bring me to Los Angeles. However, I had a possibility of getting my immigration papers and since they were/are as good as gold to get I took advantage of the opportunity. Coming here legally is the best way. I was also getting tired of stage work and wanted to do more film and I wanted the challenge of something enormous. I have always felt it's healthy to lay yourself on the line at regular intervals. In this case, I wanted to place myself in a world-wide market of competition and test my luck (that's all it is here you know). In other words, I wanted to play with the Big Kids for a while. Understand that when I mention world-wide competition, I don't confuse that with quality. They're not necessarily synonymous, especially in Los Angeles, where artistic achievement is usually determined by the number of appearances you've made on shows like "Laverne & Shirley" or "Dukes of Hazard".

I had no intention of studying in Los Angeles since I'd had a tremendous amount of professional experience (over 100 stage productions for example) and also because the academic approach is one I don't personally favour.

When I first arrived I wasn't interested in theatre work because I was saturated with it. I wanted film work and exposure through that. I've recently started to feel the urge to do stage work again and have been sponsored into a "closed" group that does workshop scenes every week and occasional public projects. However, this is a membership group and each member pays dues to belong and of course there is no pay.

That brings me to an issue I feel is an enormous problem here: there's no equivalent of a Broadway or Off-Broadway. There may be about 100 theatres scattered (and I mean scattered...this city is incredibly spread out) all over Los Angeles and probably 98 percent are Equity Waiver meaning the union has given permission for actors not to get paid and so the attitude is to do shows in the hopes of being seen and consequently given some film/T.V. work. Of the theatres that pay, there is a tendency to use "names" or actors on the rise, trying to ensure the public attendance. Theatre auditions are usually "open" auditions (cattle-calls) that can be attended by any union member (and sometimes non-union after the union auditions) so you can sometimes have 250 actors in one day trying out for a play in which they won't even get paid for their work.



Out here, the thought pattern is that going in for two auditions in six months and doing some lines in a sitcom is acting.

Getting into the Screen Actors Guild (THE major union) is a catch-22. You can't join unless you're offered a SAG contract, but you can't get the contract unless you've been to a SAG audition for the job and you can't go to the SAG audition unless you're a member of SAG. You can join SAG automatically if you've been a member of American Equity for a year. I got in on a technicality: because I had joined Equity when it was just one union (before the Canadian/American segregation) I had been listed on the New York roster for about ten years. So SAG had to let me in and I only had to pay half of the regular \$600.00 initiation fee.

Most auditions here are cold readings. You're called through your agent (and you really must have one) for an audition and you usually have a few minutes to look at the script just before you read. Sometimes you can pick up the "sides" the day before and work on the part at home the night before the actual audition. There are showcases and workshops which casting directors sometimes attend and you might do a prepared scene or a cold reading, depending on the nature of the workshop. However, there's usually a fee of \$25 to \$40 for each meeting. There are also a number of "scams"...agencies claiming your photo will be sent to casting people for a rather large fee but any casting person I've spoken to has indicated that sending a bunch of unsolicited photos that way, unrelated to specific roles, ends up in the garbage because they hardly have enough time to deal with photos submitted by agents. Of course, getting auditions is infinitely more difficult if you don't have an agent. I was very lucky: I got an agent in four days, but let me assure you it was totally luck of the draw...which is what looking for work in L.A. is...a crap shoot, arrows in the dark hoping to hit a target. I know people who have been here five years and still can't get an agent (and it's not for lack of talent). Talent doesn't seem to be the major factor here...appearance does. Even then: I know people who are very good-looking, have super personalities, are very talented and yet they don't work. It's all luck in many ways.

There are books out listing agents and casting people, but are they up-to-date? Casting people are constantly in motion, shifting from one show or studio to another. The Screen Actors Guild has a list of agents and casting people that is usually up-to-date, but is available only for SAG members. I guess it isn't very difficult to meet someone who has the list or to find someone who will get one for you. There are any number of acting coaches (specializing in how to act for film, commercials, t.v. etc.) but their quality can vary as greatly as their numbers.

A good photo is absolutely necessary and finding a good photographer can be costly. And then there are reproductions and resumes but they can usually be had for reasonable rates. Very rarely do you need a classical audition piece since the emphasis is on contemporary stuff, as you can tell by watching a little television.

There's a lot of theory about how stage actors should make the transition to film/T.V. style of acting/auditioning. However, I feel that a truly decent actor has little problem switching mediums, based on the theory that the best acting is just talking, communicating directly and the only difference in mediums is reducing the size of the "truth" to a film level. I believe you still need to maintain a theatre energy.

Most of the casting people I've spoken to feel that 80 percent of an audition is won or lost on the basis of the interview, not the reading so you must be focused, you must connect with the casting person, producer, director, whoever. And try to forget about the possible (probable) rejection and relax...casting people need to feel confidence in you. And you must always keep your mind on the quality of your work and do whatever you must to keep that alive. I spend time if not every day, then every couple of days, reading a play out loud, working on a monologue, studying television and movies to see what makes certain performances work. There's a harmful non-acting style that television has fostered and you owe it to yourself to avoid falling into it.

It's rough being an actor, but especially in this town. Getting somewhere seems to have more to do with your psychological make-up than your talent. You have to develop a tough hide without losing delicate sensibilities, you have to put up with long periods when absolutely nothing is happening for you. You have to be able to watch people with cosmetic appeal often getting jobs over more talented people and realize that they usually don't last very long.

They say it's not what, but who you know. But I know people who are friends with major stars or who have spouses in casting departments and who haven't benefited from their contacts. And it isn't because they can't act. There seem to be very few rules to pin down regarding how to get work or why you get work and there seems very little logic to it. To a good extent the industry is run by corporations now and that has a detrimental effect on the esthetics of the business. Things seem to be so removed from a semblance of art: writing tends to be mediocre and the acting gets careless because the actors get lazy. A lot of actors (especially series actors) behave like investors.

For every part you get you might lose 20-30 for reasons you can find very difficult to accept - if you even find out what they are (eyebrows too thick, too old, not enough wrinkles, timbre of your voice, too strong, not good-looking enough, too strong a sexual quality). I mean the reasons get pretty bizarre. You can hear any number of reasons within a three-week span. You must learn to deal with rejection. If you don't get a part and feel personally rejected, it's hard not to...you have been rejected. There are approximately 54,000 members in the Screen Actors Guild and 85 percent are unemployed at any given time (that includes big name actors). Fifty-seven percent of SAG members earn under \$1,000 a year.

For me the experience has been frustrating but very maturing...if I can relax in Los Angeles, I can probably relax anywhere. And while you can find levels of all this nonsense wherever you're trying to be an actor, the stakes here are enormous so if you break through the rewards can be tremendous both practically and esthetically. Having a bit of clout can allow you to work much more in ways you choose.

If I have painted a rather depressing picture, that is my intention...Los Angeles makes you feel you could be here and anonymous for the rest of your life. Whether or not I end up back in Canada is still an unknown...it depends on how long I want to put up with all this silliness.

And having said all this and considered it, there's something that overrides all of it; Ruth Gordon was asked recently how she managed to survive so many years in the business, especially the many during which she had been ignored and unappreciated. She said "Never pay attention to the facts".

### S. MIME

Kevin McKendrick of Arete Contemporary Mime Troupe has a few pointers on mime. First he addressed the kinds of skills you need as a mime.

"Some study of theatre of a physical nature is a requisite for mimes. Since miming uses a lot of acrobatics and juggling, circus technique is very helpful. Some dance experience is also very useful although too much dance background may result in stiffness. If actors are particularly talented in expressing themselves physically, a company may take them on as apprentices whether or not they have much initial miming training. Training of course is an ongoing thing. Most professionals continue to organize and take workshops, classes and the like".

Can mimes easily transfer to working in legitimate theatre? "Many mimes have done theatre before deciding to specialize in mime. They are actors, of course, and generally it is fairly easy for them to transfer into legitimate theatre by going through the same audition process as every other actor".



What opportunities are there for training and employment of mimes in Canada? "There are two major schools in Canada that offer training in mime; Mime Company Unlimited in Toronto and The School of Mime Omnibus in Montreal. As for employment there is one professional mime Company in each of Vancouver, Winnipeg, the Maritimes, Calgary and Edmonton. There are three professional mime companies in both Toronto and Montreal. All fo these companies are Equity companies. The average company has 5 members. Every year at least 5 or 6 employment opportunities become available in Canada. Some of these positions are not readily filled because there just aren't enough applicants.

Mime is a field with a fair amount of opportunity especially for women. Every mime company has one or two females in it to balance the one or two males in the group. There are more opportunities for women simply because there just aren't that many women mimes trained in Canada.

One advantage in being part of a small group as the mime companies usually are is that you can create your own work. This makes you less dependent on others for employment and more able to express yourself creatively".

#### T. AUDITION BOOKS

There are numerous collections of "Best Plays of 19\_\_\_\_" or similar collections to peruse when looking for potential audition pieces. You can also check:

"And What Are You Going To Do For Us?" a collection of audition pieces from Canadian plays. Margaret Bard, Peter Messaline, Miriam Newhouse editors, Toronto 1980.

"Actors' Guide to Monologues Revised: 700 Monologues from Classical and Modern Plays for Auditions and Class Work" by Grumbach and Emerson editors; N.Y. 1974

Check the Brock Bibliography of Published Canadian Plays in English 1766-1978; published by Playwrights Press, Toronto.

Distribution catalogues from play publishing houses; e.g. "The Playwright's Union of Canada's "Directory of Canadian Plays and Playwrights" gives you a brief description of the playwright, the plays he has written and an ultra-brief description of the work.

Another book to look at is Michael Shurtleff's Audition: Everything an Actor needs to know to get the part. N.Y., Walker (C 1978)

## U. PROFESSIONAL SCHOOLS

A committee of inquiry was formed in 1977 under the patronage of the Canada Council to research theatre training in Canada. Their report (referred to as the Black Report) affirmed that top quality professional training for actors was available at three schools in Canada: The University of Alberta, The Vancouver Playhouse Acting School and the National Theatre School in Montreal, P.Q. Following is some information regarding audition times for these schools.

### UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA, DRAMA DEPARTMENT:

The University of Alberta offers a B.F.A. in Drama. The course is currently a three year course but requires the student to have taken one academic year outside of the department before being admitted. Auditions are held during the last week of February, usually the school's reading week, across Canada in Victoria, Vancouver, Calgary, Saskatoon, Winnipeg and Toronto. Individuals wishing to audition at any of these locations should apply to the University before Christmas.

Anyone wishing to audition in Edmonton may apply to the University

ADDRESS: Department of Drama  
University of Alberta  
Edmonton, Alberta  
T6G 2C9  
(403) 432-2271

### VANCOUVER PLAYHOUSE ACTING SCHOOL:

This intensive two-year course is booked until 1985. Auditions will be held in Vancouver in the spring of 1985, probably in March. At that time 10 students from across Canada will be accepted. For further information and an application contact:

Registrar, Acting School  
543 West 7th Avenue  
Vancouver, B.C.  
V5Z 1B4  
(403) 872-6622

### THE NATIONAL THEATRE SCHOOL:

This three year course can be pursued in either English or French. Applications must be sent to the school by February 1 of any year. There is a \$35.00 application fee. Actors will be given an audition sometime between mid-March and mid-April; a decision will be reached in May.

An audition panel travels to Vancouver, Victoria, Calgary or Edmonton (Calgary in 1984, Edmonton in 1986 and it continues to alternate), Regina, Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal and points east. Call backs are made to selected actors and are held in Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal.

For further information contact: The Registrar  
The National Theatre School  
5030 Rue St. Denis  
Montreal, Quebec  
H2J 2L8  
(514) 842-7954

Addresses and information on course content of other Canadian schools offering drama classes are listed in the Directory of Canadian Theatre Schools, Downsview, Ontario 1982-83, available at the Alberta Culture Library.

#### V. CREATIVE WAITING

Actors need basic training. As in many professions, actors continue to build on that training throughout their career. The ability to control the body and voice can be improved and refined over the years.

Workshops, master classes, university or conservatory classes are useful albeit, somewhat scarce in Alberta. Music, dance, movement, and voice are all areas that enrich an actor's training. Or perhaps you just want to enroll in a gym class to keep your body well tuned. Michael Dobbin, Artistic Director of Alberta Theatre Projects in Calgary, stresses the importance of actors building their bodies into a shape that complements their voices and the roles they aspire to play.

The A.C.T.R.A. and Equity newsletters publicize some of the workshops available to actors. Theatres occasionally offer workshops. C.B.C. Radio Calgary, believes in the apprenticeship system and shows it by holding workshops where young actors may participate with and learn from experienced actors.

The workshops or classes you want to take may not always be available so you may want to initiate them with other actors. Classes can simply be an opportunity to read or perform and be judged by your peers. Depending upon time, initiative and money, you may want to organize more formal workshops with experienced actors and directors as guest speakers.

If your special interest is in film or television, why not contact the local film and television co-operative and try to arrange a mutually beneficial workshop.



Keep aware of what is going on nationally and internationally in theatre, film and television. Go to theatre and films whenever possible. Read books and periodicals in your field. These activities broaden your knowledge and can give you useful ideas and perspectives. The trade papers will keep you up to date on transactions, trends and the names of people in your field.

Waiting creatively helps actors to keep up their skills and to maintain that important asset, enthusiasm. It is also an integral part of an actor's training, particularly important in a business where one may not be working for extended periods of time.

## **W. ONGOING COURSES & WORKSHOPS SPONSORED BY ALBERTA CULTURE**

### **Artstrek**

Artstrek is an annual summer school in drama co-sponsored by Alberta Culture and various other educational institutions. Courses in drama and seminars on related topics are offered to youths (ages 14 to 18) and adults. Adult credit courses at Artstrek have been sponsored by the Department of Secondary Education, University of Alberta.

For information and deadline dates for the courses offered, please contact:

Alberta Culture  
Performing Arts-Education  
11th Floor, C.N. Tower  
10004 - 104 Avenue  
Edmonton, Alberta  
T5J 0K5 (403) 427-2563

### **Interchange**

Interchange is an annual province-wide drama-based workshop sponsored by Alberta Culture Performing Arts-Education. The intensive weekend workshop covering a wide range of theatre skills allows participants to concentrate on one course and attend related seminars and panel discussions.

Interchange is an opportunity for exposure to professionals of provincial and national stature and is a practical exploration of theatre arts.

Theatre courses are given at the beginner and advanced levels. Numerous courses are given in both acting and directing. For example, courses offered in acting would cover rehearsal and performance techniques, character development through masks or improvisational techniques.

For information on Interchange please contact:

Alberta Culture  
Performing Arts - Education  
11th Floor, C.N. Tower  
10004 - 104 Avenue  
Edmonton, Alberta  
T5J 0K5 (403) 427-2563

#### X. Financial Assistance

Alberta Culture Arts Study Grants are designed to assist individuals with formal study and personal development in the field of theatre. Individual grants of up to \$1,000.00 are awarded twice annually. Deadlines for applications are currently February 15 and August 1. To receive such awards actors are required to present an audition piece(s) and are judged on their talent, skills and proposed programs by a panel of three qualified professionals in the field of theatre.

Gordon Gordey, Alberta Culture Theatre Officer, feels that the actors who have been most successful during these auditions have been those who have had "that elusive quality called presence, have had a sense of humour and whose audition pieces allowed for transitions of mood and vocal quality. In addition the audition committees place a great deal of emphasis on assessing the difference between those actors who are talented and not particularly well-trained and those who are well-trained but whose talent is difficult to assess. Important to the choice of audition pieces is the avoidance of the popular (Top 10) audition pieces usually found in "Favourite audition Pieces of 197\_".

For further information on the study grant auditions, contact:

Gordon Gordey  
Theatre Officer  
Alberta Culture - Financial Assistance  
and Management Services  
11th Floor, C.N. Tower  
Edmonton, Alberta  
T5J 0K5 (403) 427-6713

This project was prepared by Christine Holyk under the direction of Gordon Gordey for Alberta Culture, Performing Arts Branch, January, 1985. Revised January, 1986.

## Y. PERIODICALS LIST

Available at the Alberta Culture Library:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <u>Canadian Theatre Review</u><br>204 Administrative Studies Bldg.<br>York University<br>Toronto, Ontario M3J 1P3   | - published quarterly<br>- subscription \$20 per year<br>- features articles and<br>interviews on Canadian and<br>International theatre events<br>normally built on a single<br>theme<br>- a new Canadian playscript in<br>each issue. |
| <u>Theatre Ontario Newsletter</u><br>8 York Street, 7th Floor<br>Toronto, Ontario M5J 1R2                           | - published bi-monthly<br>- subscription - magazine mailed<br>to all members<br>- descriptions of theatre events,<br>personalities, productions,<br>awards throughout Ontario  |
| <u>Plays and Players</u><br>Brevet Publishing Ltd.<br>445 Brighton Road<br>South Croydon, Surrey<br>England CR2 6EU | - published monthly<br>- subscription \$36 (US) per year<br>- articles, interviews, review of<br>London productions and in the<br>regions, Europe and US.  |
| <u>Amateur Stage</u><br>Stacey Publications<br>1 Hawthorndene Road<br>Hayes, Bromley, Kent<br>England BR2 7DZ       | - published monthly<br>- subscription \$23 per year<br>- devoted to covering amateur<br>theatre events throughout<br>Great Britain   |
| <u>The Drama Review</u><br>The MIT Press<br>28 Carleton Street<br>Cambridge, Mass. 02142                            | - published quarterly<br>- subscription \$22 per year<br>- covers International and<br>American theatre events,<br>each issue built around a<br>single theme   |
| <u>American Theatre</u><br>355 Lexington Avenue<br>New York, N.Y. 10017<br>(Theatre Communications)                 | - published monthly<br>- subscription \$24 (US) per year<br>- magazine of US non-profit<br>professional theatres<br>- personalities, events, monthly<br>listing of all productions by<br>member theatres                               |
| <u>Theatre Crafts</u><br>P.O. Box 630<br>Holmes, Pennsylvania<br>19043  | - published nine times/year<br>- subscription \$22.95/year<br>- articles pertaining to theatre<br>design, technology and new<br>equipment  |



Theatre Design and Technology  
330 West - 42nd Street  
New York, N.Y. 10036

- published quarterly
- subscription \$18 (US)/year
- devoted to theatre architecture, design, technology and equipment

Dramatics  
International Thespian Society  
3368 Central Parkway  
Cincinnati, Ohio 45225

- published monthly
- subscription \$15/year
- articles, interviews on contemporary amateur US theatre and drama

After Dark  
Danad Publishing Co.  
1180 Avenue of the Americas  
New York, N.Y. 10036

- a magazine of entertainment: theatre, film, television, music
- published monthly
- subscription \$14/year (US)

Arts Management Reader  
Rodius Group Inc.  
408 West 57th Street  
New York, N.Y. 10019

- published five times/year
- subscription \$10/year (US)

Drama  
British Theatre Association  
9 Fitzroy Square  
London W.1. England

- published quarterly

British Theatre Inst. Drama  
and Theatre Newsletter  
British Theatre Inst.  
30 Clareville Street  
London, SW7 5AW England

- published 11 times/year
- subscription /year

Children's Theatre Review  
American Theatre Association  
Children Theatre Association of America  
1000 Vermont Avenue NW  
Washington, D.C. 20005

- published quarterly
- subscription \$8(US)/year

Educational Theatre News  
Southern California Educational  
Theatre Association  
9811 Pounds Avenue  
Whittier, California 90603

- published 6 times/year
- subscription \$2

Performing Arts in Canada  
52 Avenue Road, 2nd Floor  
Toronto, Ontario  
M5R 2G3

- published quarterly
- subscription \$3/year

Performing Arts Journal

325 Spring Street, Room 318  
New York, N.Y. 10013

- published 3 times/year
- subscription \$12/year (US)

Playboard

Arch-Way Publishers Ltd.  
7560 Lawrence Drive  
Burnaby, B.C.  
V5A 1T6

- professional stage magazine
- published monthly
- subscription \$10/year
- Theatre events in B.C.

Theatre

Yale University School of Drama  
Box 2046, Yale Station  
New Haven, Connecticut  
U.S.A. 06520

- published 3 times/year
- subscription \$9/year (US)

Theatre News

American Theatre Association  
1000 Vermont Avenue N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20005

- publishes 9 times/year
- subscription \$9/year (US)

Variety

Variety Inc.  
154 West - 46th Street  
New York, N.Y.  
U.S.A. 10036

- news from the entertainment world, films, theatre, t.v.
- focus on short reviews and financial aspects of show business
- published weekly
- subscription \$45/year

Cinema

Cinema Canada  
P.O. Box 398, Outremont Stat.  
Montreal, P.Q. H2V 4N3

- film trade paper
- published monthly
- subscription \$19/year
- for individuals \$25/year













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